

June 25, 2010

The Honorable Mike Bishop
Majority Leader
Michigan Senate
S-106 Capitol Building
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

The Honorable Andy Dillon
Speaker of the House
Michigan House of Representative
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Majority Leader Bishop and Speaker Dillon:

We are writing to express our strong opposition to HCR 54, a resolution to approve the "Second Amendment" to a gaming compact between the State of Michigan and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians. The amendment in support of an off-reservation casino is premature because Little River does not have trust land at the location proposed for its second casino. We feel the amendment is not in the best interest of Western Michigan because it will set a dangerous precedent and seriously jeopardize the economic benefits derived by Indian gaming conducted on-reservation, as intended by federal law.

We have become familiar with tribal gaming issues through our support of the Gun Lake Tribe's effort to obtain a compact to conduct gaming on its initial reservation in Bradley, Michigan. People in our area know members of Gun Lake and the Tribe's history and roots in Allegan County very well. After the Tribe achieved federal recognition, we supported its right to self-determination and economic development under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. We understood that federal law and policy would determine if Gun Lake could have a casino, and therefore a compact was necessary to maximize local and state benefits.

The Little River Band does not have any trust land which is eligible for gaming in the Muskegon area. In fact, the U.S. Congress recognized Little River and specifically designated that its reservation land should be in Manistee or Mason counties. Little River does not have trust land in Muskegon and therefore the Legislature should reject the compact amendment proposed in HCR 54.

We were witness to the terribly unfair treatment that Gun Lake suffered for a decade. The Tribe waited ten years for trust land and a valid gaming compact, and to date still has not benefited from on-reservation gaming like every other tribe in Michigan. During this time, the previous governor broke his promise to negotiate after the Legislature passed a resolution urging him to sign a compact. The federal government waited over four years to take land into trust. Local opponents filed a frivolous legal challenge that took nearly five years to extinguish in court. And at one point, Governor Jennifer Granholm told Gun Lake Chairman D.K. Sprague that she would negotiate a gaming compact after his tribe got land taken into trust.

We must remind you both that review of Gun Lake's compact in the Legislature dragged on for nearly two years. Both Chambers did not affirmatively approve the compact until *after* Gun Lake had land in trust. We find it incredulous that Muskegon-area legislators and public officials, along with Little River, are demanding an answer to the so-called "delay" in approving an off-reservation casino located over 90 miles away from Little River's highly successful casino in Manistee, Michigan.

During Gun Lake's effort for parity with other federally recognized Indian tribes, many members of the Legislature joined an anti-Gun Lake group named "23 is Enough." Several current legislators were listed on its roster. We note with interest that these self-proclaimed anti-gamers have now become silent, and in some cases are even complicit, to Little River's proposal for an off-reservation casino for the purpose of expanding its market at the expense of other tribes and host communities.

In addition to the vast inequities, we are concerned by the precedent that Little River's proposal would establish. The Band's current compact requires it to gain approval from all other Michigan tribes prior to pursuing an off-reservation casino (Section 9). Governor Granholm and Little River want to simply erase that requirement – without consent of the Legislature.

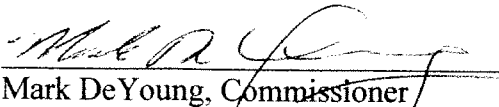
We believe Section 9 offers sound policy because if one tribe gains approval for an off-reservation casino it will open the flood gates to many more tribes seeking the same treatment. How does the State determine who gets to take the next leapfrog? This should be of particular concern in light of the fact that 7 tribes currently have compacts that will expire in 2013.

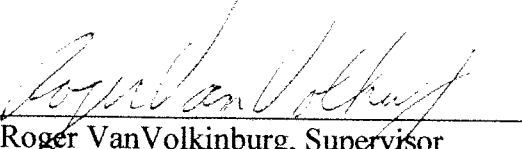
Finally, we as a community have a fiduciary duty to our constituents to protect the jobs, economic development and revenue sharing that the Gun Lake Casino will provide upon opening in the near future. Many of our organizations have planned for the increase in economic activity this project will produce. The off-reservation casino proposed in Muskegon, and those that would surely follow, threaten the benefits provided by on-reservation gaming.

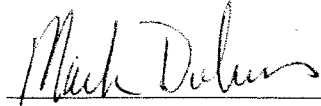
It should be noted that Governor Granholm has already signed a separate compact amendment with the Pokagon Band which provides State consent to new casinos. Because the Pokagons have already gained land into trust for gaming in Hartford, West Michigan will eventually host yet another casino in an already crowded market.

For the foregoing reasons we urge you to reject HCR 54. We appreciate your attention to this matter of great importance to our respective communities.

Sincerely,


Mark DeYoung, Commissioner
Allegan County Board of Commissioners

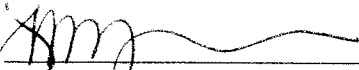

Roger VanVolkinburg, Supervisor
Wayland Township



Mark Dobias, Superintendent
Allegan Area Educational Service Agency



Marcia Halloran, Treasurer
Dorr Business Association



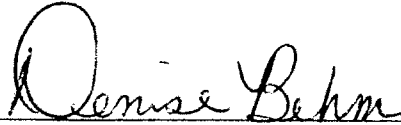
Valerie Byrnes, President
Barry County Chamber of Commerce



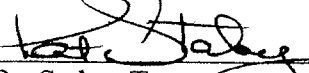
Judy Bott, Council Member
Friends of Gun Lake Indians (FOGLI)



Eivor Swan, Superintendent
Wayland Union Schools



Denise Behm, Executive Director
Wayland Area Chamber of Commerce



Pat Staley, Trustee
Wayland Township



Carlos Sanchez, Executive Director
West Michigan Hispanic Chamber



Bob Hess,
Wayland Area EMS



Valerie Byrnes, President
Barry County Economic Development Alliance

c:

Honorable Kenneth Salazar,

Secretary, Department of the Interior

Honorable Larry EchoHawk,
Assistant Secretary, Department of the Interior

Honorable Jennifer M. Granholm,
Governor of Michigan

Honorable Kevin Elsenheimer,
Minority Leader, Michigan House of Representatives

Honorable Mike Prusi,
Minority Leader, Michigan Senate

Honorable Bob Genetski
State Representative – 88th District (Allegan County)

Michigan House of Representatives

Michigan Senate

Michigan Congressional Delegation